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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF
CESSATION OF THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES

1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage March 1 on the aftermath of President Chen Shui-bian's announcement Monday that the National Unification Council (NUC) will "cease to function" and the National Unification Guidelines (NUG) will "cease to apply"; and memorial activities held in commemoration of the February 28 Incident of 1947. All papers carried a news story on their front or first few pages regarding Chen's remarks Tuesday at a February 28 Incident commemorative ceremony in which he asked those attending five times whether he had done anything wrong in terms of ceasing the operations of the NUC. All papers also reported on the State Department's and Beijing's reactions to Chen's announcement and the pan-Blue camp's plan to recall Chen. It is noteworthy that most Chinese-language papers have started to use the word "cease" rather than "abolish" or "scrap" in their reports and editorials about Chen's NUC announcement.

The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a new opinion survey on its page three which reported that 52 percent of those polled said they believe ceasing the functioning of the NUC is not conducive for Taiwan with regard to maintaining the status quo. Also, 63 percent of the respondents said they don't believe that Chen has no intention to change the status quo. The poll also found Chen's approval rating at 25 percent, but 47 percent of those polled said they don't support the plan to recall Chen over his decision on the NUC.

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, and an editorial in the limited-circulated, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" both welcomed Chen's decision and said he is moving in the right direction. An editorial in the pro-status quo "China Times" and an editorial in the limited-circulated, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" both called Chen the only and biggest winner in the controversy over the NUC. "China Times" Washington correspondent Norman Fu said in his "Washington Outlook" column that Washington's strategy now is to hold Chen to his pledges. Professor Chen I-hsin of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies, however, opined in the "China Times" that "the United States' compromise with Chen indicates Washington's indulgence of Taiwan independence, which was just sufficient enough to encourage Chen to open up a [new] battlefield for holding a referendum on [Taiwan's] new constitution." End summary.

A) "Taiwan Moving Forward"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] said (3/1):

". Following the cessation of the NUC and NUG, to write a new constitution to ensure that Taiwan is a normal country will be the island's next step. While [we] show support for President Chen's decision to resist both internal and external pressure and announce the cessation of the NUC and NUG, we also need to express concern about whether the pan-Blue camp will use the fourth point on [Taiwan's] constitutional reengineering, which Chen announced in his seven-point statement at the National Security Council meeting [Monday], as an excuse to block [Taiwan's] new constitution. If the pan-Blue camp plans to do so, it will be terminated by people like the NUC and NUG [was terminated] and become part of history!"

B) "No Cause for Alarm over NUC"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (3/1):

"President Chen Shui-bian's announcement that the National Unification Council (NUC) will cease to function and the Guidelines for National Unification will cease to apply has prompted concern in the US, sharp criticism from China and plans to impeach Chen in the pan-blue camp. But all Chen has really done is to declare the death of a long inert boy and give politics in Taiwan a bit of a shake. There is no need to overreact. .

"By announcing that the NUC and the guidelines will 'cease to function,' rather than be 'abolished,' Chen has tried to achieve a political compromise. The president has moved in the right direction, but the timing is unfortunate. The

right time to make the announcement would have been during his 2000 inauguration."

C) "Only Chen Shui-bian Is the Biggest Winner This Time"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (3/1):

"President Chen has again [made and] concluded a perfect demonstration of [his] 'conflict, compromise, move a step forward' [operational theory]! The NUC has 'ceased to function, and the NUG has 'ceased to apply.' For Washington, since the wording that [Chen] used was not so strong, it may decide to 'accept [the result] unenthusiastically despite its displeasure' in the hope that the controversy can be put to an end as early as possible. As for Chen, he will leave it to Washington to consider the English wording and 'make its own interpretation,' while inside Taiwan, there is no point at all in trying to distinguish the semantic or phraseological difference between 'cease' and 'abolish.' The most important thing is that Chen has achieved the strategic purpose he desired by successfully adopting the tactics of 'moving two steps forward, then one step back. .'

"We would like to pose a question: Will there still be the 'Five No's' pledge? Chen surely will not talk about it again, but will the United States? . For Chen, he can do it ten thousand times if anyone wants him to verbally promise that he will 'not change the status quo.' The point is that the 'Five No's' 'Incantation Hoop' [over Chen] has already been removed, and all the more, the 'Five No's' [pledge] disappeared by his simply tearing apart the 'last No.' Is this business [with the United States] profitable [for Chen]? Of course! Without the restraints of the 'Five No's' pledge, there is now much more room in which Chen can manipulate [matters]. Yes, one may say that Chen did make many new commitments and pledges. But if the Five No's pledge, which used to be 'as firm as a rock,' could be torn

apart so easily, is there anything else that cannot be changed? As a result, we can be sure that regarding this matter, Chen is the biggest winner!

"[If we] look at the other side of the tearing apart of the 'Five No's' pledge, [we'll see] that Chen has made Washington, Beijing and Taipei all pretty busy with 'crisis management' for him alone for a whole month. Beijing has suppressed [its anger] for the time being and just watches how Washington is going to handle it. But all it sees is that Washington was stuck in a dilemma - it could not stop Chen, and in the meantime it had scruples about [punishing him]; Washington was afraid that it would harm Taiwan if it penalized Chen. . . When Chen finally decided to use the word 'cease' to replace 'abolish,' he acted as if he had given Washington much face. During this process, it was the United States, not Chen, who had been put on a short leash. . . Yes, anyone with a sense of international affairs would know that after a whole month's worth of 'pushing and bumping,' the foundation of mutual trust between the United States and Taiwan has been thinned all the more. But what can a big country like the United States do to Chen if he has made it very clear that he doesn't care at all [?] .

"Chen started the agenda to 'scrap the NUC and NUG,' which rescinded his own pledge, jerked Washington-Beijing-Taipei [relations] into a state of volatility, forced everyone to spin with him, and pushed Taiwan further down into a desperate situation. All the more, he gives Taiwan no chance to calm down now to gradually resolve the many emergent problems that should have been dealt with long ago. We must announce sadly and painfully that in the controversy over the 'abolition of the NUC and NUG,' which was triggered by Chen single-handedly, Chen has won, but Taiwan has lost!"

D) "United States Wants to Hold Chen to His Pledges"

Washington correspondent Norman Fu said in the "Washington Outlook" column of the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (3/1):

". Chen Shui-bian is applying a nibbling approach, or 'salami tactics' as Westerners term it, to the United States in an attempt to achieve his goal of 'gobbling' [everything he wants]. The situation will get increasingly dangerous, and if the United States fails to show its determination [to stop Chen], it will end up in a disaster. This under Chen's manipulation, the situation across the Taiwan Strait is

already changing. When Beijing becomes intolerant [of Taiwan] and there is nothing Washington can do, it may very likely resort to arms.

"Washington and Beijing originally have had a tacit agreement that the cross-Strait issue is not a top priority between them and it can be 'put on the back burner.' Now that A-bian triggered the controversy of the abolition of the NUC and NUG, the issue will surely be the focus of U.S. President George W. Bush's meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao when the latter visits Washington in April. Such a development is unfavorable for Washington, Beijing and Taipei. The only one who is benefited from the process is Chen, but [the benefits he got] will be transient. In the end, Chen will be even less important than a droplet in the big waves of history; he will be nothing more than a 'footnote' at best."

E) "[Chen] Takes off His Mask and Is Ready to Push for [Taiwan's] New Constitution?"

Professor Chen I-hsin of Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of American Studies opined in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (2/28):

". The question is that this controversy [over Chen's decision to cease the functioning of the NUC] did not die down because of Chen's announcement. The United States' compromise with Chen indicates Washington's indulgence of

Taiwan independence, which was just sufficient enough to encourage Chen to open up a [new] battlefield for holding a referendum on [Taiwan's] new constitution. .

"Even though Washington sent out its last diplomatic message [to Taipei], Chen just played with words and fooled the United States. [Chen's move] gave people a deep feeling that the United States' superpower position is declining, and it is expected that Washington's prestige in Asia will be seriously damaged. . Chen will naturally become a leader of Taiwan independence after he has successfully passed a critical test this time by playing with words. All the DPP candidates who plan to engage in elections will either bow to Chen now or copy his tricks in the future. But should there be any instability in Taiwan society, across the Taiwan Strait, or even in the Asia-Pacific region in the future, it will likely be the result of the misfortune caused by Washington's indulgence of Chen."

F) "Chen Scores Victory, but at the Cost of His Image"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (3/1):

". Chen's diplomatic victory clearly was a major setback for Washington's policy on Taiwan. The Bush administration had tried almost all possible means to persuade Chen not to abolish the guidelines ever since he first revealed his intention early last month to do so. . That Chen dared to say no to Washington this time was a calculated move. First, U.S. support is no longer of great importance to him at a time when he has only two years left before leaving office. What is more, he knew that Taiwan is so important strategically that the U.S. cannot afford to give up this island just because of differences in a single policy area. . Policy makers there may find it necessary to consider some new policy measures to prevent Chen from pursuing political changes unilaterally. The U.S., while reluctant to see Taiwan leaning toward Beijing politically, is unwilling to see it pushing for formal independent either. They believe that a Taiwan maintaining its present political standing is in the best interests of the U.S. ."

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